



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** January 26, 2022

**01**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### SUBJECT

**ESTABLISH AUTHORITY TO ADVERTISE AND AWARD A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR THE WATERFRONT ACTIVE RECREATION PROJECT AND APPROVE A CEQA ADDENDUM (DISTRICT: 3)**

### OVERVIEW

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) operates the 12-acre Waterfront Park, which was completed in May 2014. The park is an important part of the downtown San Diego fabric and an iconic part of the landscape with an average 200,000 visitors a year. It is a place for family gatherings, music concerts, weddings, picnics, and playtime for kids. The park features large green lawns, plazas, decorative gardens, a children's play zone, and picnic areas. Since this park was built, the northeast portion of Waterfront Park, developed with decorative gardens and pathways, has received significantly less use than the southern portion of the park.

On December 10, 2019, the Board of Supervisors approved funding for a feasibility study and public outreach to determine the interest and location for active recreation programming at Waterfront Park. DPR engaged the community in January and October 2020, April 2021, and January 2022 with a total of 154 attendees between four public outreach meetings. DPR received 365 online surveys and mailed over 13,000 flyers to residents to develop a concept plan that reflects community needs. Community-prioritized amenities included in the project are a basketball court, off-leash dog zone, pickleball courts, fitness equipment, table tennis and a t-ball field. Redevelopment of the northeastern section of the park will expand access to recreation experiences for downtown residents and visitors of Waterfront Park. Adjustments to the amenities in the underutilized northeast portion of the park will provide new active recreation opportunities for San Diego residents.

Today's request will authorize the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract for the Waterfront Park Active Recreation project for estimated at \$2,500,000 including contingency, and to take any action authorized by Section 401 et seq. of the Administrative Code. The remaining funds of \$500,000 will be used for design, environmental review, and project-related expenses, including inspections, permitting, construction management, and project administration. The total project cost for Waterfront Park Active Recreation project of \$3,000,000 was included in the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Operational

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Plan based on General Purpose Revenue. If approved, project construction will begin in spring 2022 with completion anticipated in fall 2022.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the San Diego County Administration Center Waterfront Park Development and Waterfront Park Master Plan (State Clearinghouse No. 2002081089), on file with the Department of General Services has been completed in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State and County CEQA Guidelines, that the Board of Supervisors (Board) has reviewed and considered the information contained in the FEIR and Addendum thereto dated November 11, 2021 on file (Attachment B) prior to approving the project, and that the Addendum reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board.

Find that there are no changes in the project, proposed project, or in the circumstances under which the project is undertaken that involve significant new impacts which were not considered in the previously certified FEIR adopted on May 6, 2003, that there is no substantial increase in the severity of the previously identified significant effects, and that no new information of substantial importance has become available since the FEIR was certified as explained in the updated Environmental Review Update Checklist Form dated November 11, 2021.

2. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to advertise and award a construction contract and take any other action authorized by Section 401 et seq. of the Administrative Code and Public Contract Code section 22160-22169, with respect to contracting for the construction of the Waterfront Park Active Recreation project.
3. Designate the Director, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), as the County of San Diego Officer responsible for administering the construction contract for the construction of the Waterfront Park Active Recreation project in accordance with Section 430.4 of the County Code of Administrative Ordinance and Board Policy F-41, Public Works Construction Projects.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The new amenities will be located in downtown San Diego, and the Waterfront Park Active Recreation project would result in a positive community health impact for residents of all ages. The proposed project will expand active recreation opportunities in an area that does not currently have sufficient access to such programming. Based on the available data from the 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year estimates, 16 percent of the residents in the 92101 zip code live below the poverty level. The addition of active recreation at Waterfront Park would increase access opportunities for these individuals by providing a venue to exercise and improve health outcomes. The project would attract residents to spend time near the bay to access nature as well as the proposed recreational opportunities.

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According to the available data from the 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 22.5 percent of the population in the zip code 92101 do not have access to a vehicle. With the closest available active recreation opportunities miles away, the addition of active recreation programming will increase access to recreation for the residents of downtown. The new section of the park will create recreation opportunities to play basketball, engage in a game of pickleball, exercise at the exercise stations, relax at the off-leash dog area, or play t-ball at the baseball diamond. The new section of the park will provide new opportunities to build connections for residents of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 Operational Plan for the Capital Outlay Fund and will result in total costs of \$3,000,000 for Capital Project 1024596 Waterfront Park Active Recreation. Construction costs are estimated at \$2,500,000, including contingency. The remaining funds of \$500,000 will be used for design, environmental review, and project related expenses, including inspections, permitting, construction management and project administration. The funding source is General Purpose Revenue (\$3,000,000).

Upon completion of this project, ongoing operations are estimated at \$500,944 annually, which will include utility costs, maintenance supplies and services. An additional two full time staff and additional part time temporary help will be needed to staff the new amenities in FY 2022-23. The Park is projected to open in FY 2022-23, and these costs and staffing requests will be included in future Operational Plans pending availability of funding. The funding source will be Department of Parks and Recreation General Purpose Revenue (\$462,758) and User Fees (\$38,186).

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

While no formal advisory panel exists for Waterfront Park, community and inter-jurisdictional input was sought during the master planning process from such groups and entities as the Little Italy Association (LIA), San Diego Port Tenants Association, City of San Diego, Solar Turbines, Little Italy Residents Association (LIRA), Port of San Diego and Downtown San Diego Partnership. Three community workshops were held during the master planning process and are outlined in the Background section.

**BACKGROUND**

Waterfront Park is an important part of the downtown San Diego fabric, and an iconic part of the landscape. It is a place for family gatherings, music concerts, weddings, picnics, and play time for kids. On any given day, the southern portion of Waterfront Park is teeming with life with families enjoying a picnic and kids playing in the playground and splashing in the water fountains. The 12-acre park features large green lawns, plazas, decorative gardens, a children's play zone, and picnic areas. The large green lawns are used for a variety of festivals, weddings, concerts, and family recreation. The northeast portion of Waterfront Park, which is approximately 1.5 acres in size, is developed with decorative gardens and pathways, and receives significantly less use than the

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southern portion of the park. At present, there is not sufficient space for active recreation in the downtown area, which is compounded by a rapidly growing population. The closest active recreation opportunities are miles away and would require a personal vehicle or public transportation to access them.

On December 10, 2019, the Board of Supervisors approved the appropriations of funding to investigate redevelopment of Waterfront Park through a feasibility study and public outreach. The goal of the feasibility study was to determine the best possible location for active recreation programming in the downtown area, located at Waterfront Park or in the surrounding area. DPR engaged the community in three public outreach meetings, three online surveys, and mailing over 9,000 flyers to residents. DPR has worked closely with residents and stakeholders to determine the needs and requested programming to develop a concept plan that reflects the greatest use of the 1.5-acre area. Community-prioritized amenities included in the project are a basketball court, off-leash dog zone, pickleball courts, fitness equipment, table tennis and a t-ball field to be located in the northeast corner of Waterfront Park.

The northeast corner of Waterfront Park currently features botanical collections, flowering plants, meandering paths, an art sculpture, and seating areas. This space was originally envisioned to provide passive recreation opportunities. However, the project site is underutilized by visitors. At the same time, the downtown area is facing a shortage of active recreation facilities in the area.

*Public Outreach*

DPR reached out to stakeholders such as downtown businesses and neighborhood associations to initiate the public outreach process. Prior to the first public meeting, a flyer was mailed to 970 surrounding residents as well as an invitational letter distributed to stakeholders such as Little Italy Association (LIA), Port of San Diego, San Diego Port Tenants Association, City of San Diego, Solar Turbines, Little Italy Residents Association (LIRA), and Downtown San Diego Partnership. An email was sent to Waterfront Park's existing contact list, which includes residents, resident organizations, restaurants, business associations, San Diego Convention Center, downtown event coordinators, government agencies, homeowners associations, neighboring hotels, and local businesses.

On January 29, 2020, twenty-three participants attended the workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to introduce the project and explore the possibility of converting the project site from an underutilized passive space to active recreation. Two stations with project site maps helped facilitate the discussions during the presentation. Overall, the idea of converting the space to satisfy the active recreation needs of the region was well received by the participants.

After the first public meeting, DPR distributed a 10-minute online survey to community members and stakeholders to get feedback on demand for active recreation in the downtown area, as well as to understand their programming desires so that conceptual plan options could be developed. A total of 159 completed surveys were received during a four-week period, with 75 percent of the participants from the surrounding zip code of 92101. The addition of active recreation amenities in the northeast corner of Waterfront Park was supported by 79 percent of the participants, while

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21 percent did not support the change of use. The participants ranked their most favored amenities, with an off-leash dog park, pickleball court, and basketball court at the top of the list.

Prior to the second public meeting, DPR mailed a flyer to 4,159 surrounding households in an expanded mailing list of the zip code 92101 in addition to the stakeholders listed above. DPR also sent an invitational email to the participants of the January public meeting and online survey participants.

On October 19, 2020, DPR virtually presented the draft concepts that reflected the public comments obtained from the first public outreach workshop and surveys. Thirty-six households attended the workshop. Based on a poll taken during the workshop, 75 percent of the participants learned about the workshop via flyers that were mailed to them.

After the second public meeting, DPR distributed another 10-minute online survey to community members and stakeholders to obtain feedback related to the draft concept plans. A total of 206 surveys were completed, and based on the participant's reported zip codes, approximately 40 percent of the respondents live within a five-mile radius and another 21 percent live between five and eight miles away. Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated that Waterfront Park would be a more appropriate location for such activities or had no preference in the specific location. Sixty-two percent of the participants who answered the question preferred the same draft concept plan, which DPR utilized for the final concept plan. The active recreation programming already included aligned with the participants' interest in these facilities.

Prior to the third public meeting, DPR mailed a flyer to 4,159 surrounding households as well as distributed an invitational letter to the stakeholders listed above. DPR also sent an invitational email to the participants of the January and October public meetings and online survey participants. On April 15, 2021, DPR presented the timeline of the project, public outreach process and results, and the final concept plan. Fifty-nine households attended the workshop. Overall, the participants were in agreement with the idea of active recreation on the project site.

Prior to the fourth public meeting, DPR mailed a flyer to 4,159 surrounding households as well as distributed an invitational letter to the stakeholders listed above. DPR also sent an invitational email to the survey participants as well as participants of the January and October 2020, and April 2021 public meetings. On January 5, 2022, DPR reviewed the project timeline, previous public outreach efforts and subsequent results, and updates on next steps. Thirty-six households attended the workshop. Overall, the participants continue to support the project and look forward to the completion of the new amenities.

*Project Design and Amenities*

Throughout the design process, DPR has worked closely with residents and stakeholders to develop a concept plan that reflects the greatest use of the 1.5-acre project site. Community-prioritized amenities included in the project are a basketball court, off-leash dog park with agility equipment, pickleball courts, fitness equipment, table tennis and a t-ball field with a 100-ft. foul line. In addition to the active recreation elements, the redeveloped park area will include expansive

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trees, abundant shrubs, and areas that preserve and enhance the existing garden with native plants to improve local pollinator populations in the area. Benches and security lighting will also be included in the project and additional chess tables will be installed on the southern side of the park. Redevelopment of the northeastern section of the park will expand access to recreation experiences for downtown residents and patrons of Waterfront Park.

The total cost for Waterfront Park Active Recreation project is estimated at \$3,000,000. Construction costs are estimated at \$2,500,000, including contingency. The remaining funds of \$500,000 will be used for design, environmental review, and project related expenses including inspections, permitting, construction management and project administration. Today's request will authorize the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a construction contract for the Waterfront Park Active Recreation project estimated at \$2,500,000 including contingency, and to take any action authorized by Section 401 et seq. of the Administrative Code. If approved, project construction will begin in spring 2022 with construction completion anticipated in fall 2022.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

On May 6, 2003, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the San Diego County Administration Center Waterfront Park Development and Waterfront Park Master Plan and certified the associated Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) (State Clearinghouse No. 2002081089) under the Department of General Services in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State and County CEQA Guidelines. This project included the conversion of the previous parking lot into a public use area.

On January 25, 2011, an Addendum to the 2003 FEIR, dated January 19, 2011, was adopted by the Board for approval of revised components of the Waterfront Park Master Plan project with more detailed construction and operation details. On May 24, 2011, a separate Addendum to the 2003 FEIR, dated May 12, 2011, was considered by the Board in connection with evaluated consolidation of parking spaces into a single parking lot.

Today, a subsequent Environmental Review Update Checklist for Projects with Previous Environmental Documents was prepared pursuant to Section 15162 of the State CEQA Guidelines to evaluate the proposed project changes. The analysis within the checklist demonstrates that no additional significant impacts would result from implementation of the proposed project, including proposed project changes not previously analyzed. The proposed action is to be taken in furtherance of the Master Plan objectives and is consistent with the activities contemplated and analyzed in the certified FEIR. There has been no substantial change in the project or circumstances under which the project was undertaken, and no new information of substantial importance is available that would result in new or more severe impacts than those previously analyzed. Therefore, no additional environmental review is required. An Addendum to the previously certified FEIR was prepared pursuant to Section 15164 of the State CEQA Guidelines to document the proposed project changes.

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**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed actions support the Community Initiative in the County of San Diego's 2022-27 Strategic Plan by promoting an environment where residents' quality of life is improved by increasing access to parks, open spaces, and outdoor experiences.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah E. Aghassi".

SARAH E. AGHASSI  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A – Vicinity Map

Attachment B – CEQA Addendum